

**SUMMARY OF THE
PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE MEETING
AUGUST 15, 2000**

The Proficiency Testing Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference at 1 p.m. on Tuesday, August 15, 2000. The meeting was led by its chair, Ms. Barbara Burmeister of the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene. *The main purpose of this meeting was to discuss the open committee position, analyte and method codes, and equivalency criteria for proficiency testing (PT) samples.*

INTRODUCTION

Ms. Burmeister reviewed the minutes from the teleconference on August 1, 2000. The committee agreed that the minutes are final. The status of the Action Items is as follows:

- C Ms. Barbara Burmeister sent emails to the NELAC Director and the NELAC Chair about the open committee position and the potential conflict of interest (discussed below).
- C Ms. Burmeister is waiting to receive a response from the Office of Water about the analyte codes before submitting the PT Field of Testing (FOT) Errata Sheet for posting on the NELAC Website.
- C Mr. Larry Jackson was not present to provide an update on the subcommittee progress. However, Ms. Burmeister was able to share some information (see below).
- C Ms. Burmeister sent a response to Mr. Steve Arms about his question.
- C Committee members were asked to come up with suggestions for equivalency criteria for PT samples. This is discussed further below.

NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS

In summary, there is concern about a potential conflict of interest in filling the open committee position with a particular nominee. Although the qualifications of the nominee are acceptable, a current committee member is a contractor to the nominee's organization. Ms. Burmeister emailed both Ms. Jeanne Hankins, NELAC Director, and Dr. Chuck Brokopp, NELAC Chair, to see whether the committee can pursue this nominee.

Ms. Burmeister said that she received a response from Ms. Hankins, but not from Dr. Brokopp. From a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standpoint, Ms. Hankins stated that EPA will make every effort to assure that an EPA official and EPA contractor do not serve on the same committee. Ms. Burmeister said that Ms. Anne Rhyne, the committee's liaison to the Board of Directors, had also suggested that the committee chose another nominee to fill the position. A final decision has not been made yet by the committee.

PT FIELDS OF TESTING ERRATA SHEET

The PT FOT Errata Sheet was sent to EPA-National Exposure research Laboratory (NERL) in Cincinnati so that they could check the analyte codes for compatibility with their database. Ms. Burmeister spoke to Mr. Bob Graves about their status. He informed her that staff at EPA-NERL are reviewing the analyte codes and should be done by the end of August, 2000. Because NERL's database is only for water analytes, they are not concerned with the solid waste analyte codes.

Ms. Burmeister asked participants if there was a strong need for the analyte codes. Mr. Chuck Wibby replied that the providers really need the codes, as well as the errata sheet. For analytes within the Water Supply (WS) and Water Pollution (WP) program, it is not a problem. However, outside of the WS and WP, there may be problems because of repeated analyte codes. Ms. Burmeister said that she will call Mr. Graves on Monday, August 21, 2000 if she has not received an update.

PT SUBCOMMITTEE FOR IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

Mr. Jackson was not present to provide an update on the development of the new subcommittee on standardization issues related to implementation of the NELAC PT Program. However, Ms. Burmeister had spoken to him, and shared her knowledge. She said that there are three laboratories signed up to participate in the subcommittee so far. Mr. Jackson has not forwarded the announcement about the subcommittee to non-EPA organizations yet. He will continue to try to identify potential contributors to contact and will provide Ms. Burmeister an update on August 23, 2000.

Mr. Jackson has tentatively reserved meeting facilities at Ft. Meade in Baltimore, MD on September 19 and 20, 2000 for the PT subcommittee meeting.

SCHEDULE OF FACE-TO-FACE MEETING

The committee is still considering scheduling the face-to-face meeting to coincide with the subcommittee meeting so committee members can attend. Ms. Burmeister said that the subcommittee issues will be the committee's primary focus. The committee can handle other business in a few hours either before or after the subcommittee meeting. Ms. Burmeister said that she will keep the committee posted.

METHOD CODES

Mr. Wibby began discussion with a brief history about method codes. He said that under the WS and WP program, a two-digit method code is required for every result submitted. However, redundant codes are often submitted by various providers. This has not really been a problem because the method codes are not sent back to the states.

For the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP), redundant codes are a problem. Therefore, the task of designing a universal set of method codes was assigned to the PT Committee. There were two main options for accomplishing this task: 1) start with an existing list and build on it, or 2) create a brand new list. Mr. Wibby said that it would be hard to convince everyone to

use the same method codes. Therefore, one option they considered was creating look-up tables for providers to cross-reference their method codes to the standardized codes.

A working list of method codes has been created, however, codes have not yet been assigned. The committee obtained hard copies of the method code lists from New Jersey and New York, but they prefer to start from an electronic list. Ms. Burmeister offered to contact Mr. Matt Caruso to request an electronic copy of New York's method code list. Mr. Wibby and Mr. Ralph Obenauf will continue to work on the standardized method codes.

MEMBERSHIP AND OUTREACH COMMITTEE UPDATE

Ms. Cindy Nettrour said that there is no update from the Membership and Outreach Committee.

NIST ITEMS

Equivalency Criteria for PT Samples

Ms. Burmeister had asked the committee during the last teleconference to come up with suggestions for the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) to measure equivalency between PT providers. Mr. Wibby said that he had in the past sent NIST a set of criteria which could be used to assess an analyte to determine if it is fit for use. These criteria included, for example, consideration of failure rates, difference from predicted mean, and the spread of standard deviation.

Ms. Burmeister said that Appendix D of Chapter 2 was originally included in the NELAC Standards to ensure continuing oversight of PT providers. However, NIST is looking for guidance from this committee.

Chapter 2 Requirements for NIST

At the request of Ms. Reenie Parris from NIST, Ms. Burmeister asked if there were any other Chapter 2 requirements not being met by NIST. A participant responded that NIST was supposed to hold a PT Provider Caucus. Ms. Burmeister said that a comparison of Chapter 2, Appendix D and the NIST Handbook 150-19 was done by a committee member about 2 years ago. She will locate the comparison information for discussion during the committee's next teleconference. She will then will respond to Ms. Parris.

MISCELLANEOUS

Ms. Burmeister said that since a NELAC Accrediting Authority now has the authority to determine if an organization can be a Proficiency Testing Oversight Body (PTOB), the committee will probably soon be working with the State of New York to review the American Association for Laboratory Accreditation (A2LA). (At NELAC VI, Dr. Ken Jackson said that the New York state code gives them authority for PTOB approval.)

The next committee teleconference is scheduled for August 29, 2000, from 1:00 to 2:30 p.m.

ACTION ITEMS
PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE MEETING
AUGUST 15, 2000

Item No.	Action	Date to be Completed
1.	Ms. Burmeister will contact Mr. Bob Graves if she has not received an update from EPA-NERL's review of the analyte codes.	8/21/00
2.	Mr. Larry Jackson will provide an update on the new subcommittee to Ms. Burmeister.	8/23/00
3.	Ms. Burmeister will contact Mr. Matt Caruso to request an electronic copy of New York's method codes.	
4.	Mr. Ralph Obenauf will continue work on standardized method codes (along with Mr. Chuck Wibby).	
5.	Ms. Burmeister will respond to Ms. Reenie Parris about the Chapter 2 requirements for NIST.	
6.	Mr. Wibby will send to Ms. Burmeister the equivalency criteria that had previously been sent to NIST..	

PARTICIPANTS
PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE MEETING
AUGUST 15, 2000

Name	Affiliation	Address
Burmeister, Barbara Chair	Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene	T: (608) 265-1100, ext. 107 F: (608) 265-1114 E: burmie@mail.slh.wisc.edu
Autry, Lara (absent)	USEPA/OAQPS	T: (919) 541-5544 F: (919) 541-1039 E: autry.lara@epa.gov
Haynes, RaeAnn (absent)	Oregon Dept. of Environmental Quality	T: (503) 229-5983 F: (503) 229-6924 E: haynes.raeann@deq.state.or.us
Jackson, Larry (absent)	Environmental Quality Management, NH	T: (603) 924-6852 F: (603) 924-6346 E: lpjackson@msn.com
Mudambi, Anand (absent)	US Army Corps of Engineers	T: (703) 603-8796 F: (703) 603-9112 E: mudambi.anand@epa.gov
Nettrour, Cindy	American Water Works Services Co., Inc.	T: (618) 239-0516 F: (618) 235-6349 E: cnettrou@bellevillelab.com
Obenauf, Ralph	SPEX CertiPrep, Inc.	T: (732) 549-7144 F: (732) 603-9647 E: robenauf@spexcsp.com
Parker, Faust (absent)	PBS&J Environmental Toxicology Laboratory	T: (713) 977-1500 F: (713) 977-9233 E: FRParker@pbsj.com
Rhyne, Anne Board Liaison (absent)	TX Nat. Res. Conserv. Comm.	T: (512) 239-1291 F: (512) 239-2550 E: arhyne@tnrcc.state.tx.us
Steinman, Marykay	M. J. Reider Associates, Inc.	T: (616) 961-4713 F: (616) 961-7530 E: bcoyle2152@aol.com
Wibby, Chuck (invited guest)	Environmental Resources Association	T: (303) 431-8454 F: (303) 421-0159 E: qcstds@aol.com
Lloyd, Jennifer (contractor support)	Research Triangle Institute	T: (919) 541-5942 F: (919) 541-5929 E: jml@rti.org